

## House passes bill targeting text messaging by sexual predators

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — The House of Representatives today passed legislation to make it a crime for sexual predators to use text messaging to lure young victims. HB 2641, sponsored by Rep. Andy Olson (R-Albany) and Rep. Sherrie Sprenger (R-Scio), updates Oregon's online luring law to include the popular technology.

HB 2641 addresses a fast growing communication problem, known as "sexting" that involves sending explicit messages and photos to lure victims, Rep. Olson said. "The legislation addresses the use of text messaging to strengthen our online luring laws and better protect our children."

HB 2641 modifies the definition of online communication for the purposes of "online sexual corruption of a child" to include telephone text messages. Oregon's online luring law targets adult violators 18 years old or older. Rep. Olson said HB 2641 gives law enforcement a new tool that it previously did not have to prosecute sexual predators who engage in text messaging their potential victims.

“Last year, law enforcement was not able to take action on an incident involving a high school teacher and a female student because there was no crime for illicit text messaging,” Rep. Olson said. “Though the teacher was eventually removed through administrative action, the principal asked for text messaging to be added to the statute. HB 2641 delivers on that request.”

Rep. Sprenger said the Legislature must keep pace with new technologies that predators can use to lure children. Nearly half of children ages 11 to 12 have cell phones, yet state law has not been updated to address the emerging trend.

“The Legislature passed Oregon’s first online luring law just two years ago, yet the law is already outdated,” Rep. Sprenger said. “HB 2641 expands the definition of online communication to include text messaging with e-mail, instant messaging and chat rooms. As technology continues to outpace state law, the Legislature must continually revisit these statutes to keep kids safe.”

HB 2641 now moves to the Senate. The bill, announced last summer, is part of the House Republicans’ 2009 agenda, Building a Better Oregon.

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